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The Editor
"Queenscliffe Herald"
Hobson Street
Queenscliffe Vic.3225

Dear Ed,

I refer to your excellent insert to the March issue, the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Centenary, and would like to make some comments.

1. My paternal grandfather, George Frederick William Stevens grew up from infancy to young manhood living in Victorian lighthouses with his parents. He then entered the Victorian Lighthouse service on 1st May 1889. He subsequently served at Split Point 1/7/1893 and Cape Nelson 1/10/1896 as Assistant Keeper. Then on 17/6/1899 was appointed Acting Senior Keeper at Gellibrand. He was first appointed to the Point Lonsdale light on 8th July 1900 as Senior Assistant, and on 14/1/1903 was appointed as Light Keeper. He was again appointed to Lonsdale in 1920 for 2 years, and retired in 1923. Over the next 20 years he did occasional relieving in various Victorian Lights as Keepers took service leave. He died in 1944.
2. Your photograph with the caption "George Stevens" may well be a man of that name, but it certainly is not that of my grandfather the Light Keeper. This can be seen from the enclosed copy of a studio photo of grandad taken circa 1890.
3. In retirement, grandad and grandma lived in a house called "Samarai", (see attached article which I wrote titled "First Australian Ship to Shore Wireless Transmission".) on the main road Point Lonsdale until his death in 1944. He eked out his pension by selling home grown vegetables to the locals and tourists, and by trapping rabbits each evening. The rabbit flesh was food for the table and the pelts he sold in Geelong each month. To fertilise the sandy soil in his garden, grandad dragged literally tons of kelp from the beach over the years, and dug it into his vegie patches. ✕
+ As testament to the effectiveness of this fertiliser, I have a photo taken circa 1920 of my older brother aged 5 standing alongside a bean plant with 3 huge beans, two of which are almost as long as my brother was tall - possibly 3 feet.
4. If you have access to newspaper archives, look up "The Sentinel", dated 19th November 1910, the article headed "Miraculous Escape from Drowning". This article recounts how grandad ran along the Point Lonsdale pier, dived into the water and saved from drowning his wife (grandma), and his younger son (my uncle Harold). Fortunately for me there were two men passing by who swam out to save my dad, then aged 11, who was at that point well under the water. If nothing else, this article confirms that grandad was the Light Keeper at Point Lonsdale at that date. This might explain a gap of 5 years, 1906 - 1911 in your list of Keepers' names.
5. One of my heirlooms is a book "Lighthouses of the World", printed in 1866. An entry confirms your note that the commissioning of the "Lonsdale Point" light was in 1863. Presumably because of the lengthy time taken to communicate with England in those days, the relevant published details in this 1866 edition are scarce. All that is stated is that it had a low intensity light visible in good conditions only for 7 miles, and that it had a green outside safe sector and a red inside danger sector. By comparison, the higher Shortland Bluff light commissioned in 1842 has full details of latitude and longitude, height above high water, was a second level magnitude dioptric light ,